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Admiral resigns No. 2 CIA post

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WASHINGTON — Adm. Bobby Inman announced his resignation as deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency Wednesday, and sources in the intelligence community said the move resulted from friction between him and the White House.

Inman sent a letter of resignation to the White House a month ago, asking to leave his post as soon as a successor could be confirmed. The White House released Inman's letter, which contained no reason for quitting, and one from President Reagan accepting the resignation "with deep regret."

Inman told associates Wednesday that he considered his resignation a "welcome development" and that he intended to enter private business. Inman, 51, also announced that he would retire from the Navy.

Inman first got caught in a cross-fire involving the White House last summer when Sen. Barry Goldwater (R., Ariz.) tried to get Inman the job of CIA director.

THAT EPISODE began with the resignation of Max Hugel, a protege of CIA Director William Casey, as deputy director for operations after disclosure of questionable business activities by Hugel. Goldwater, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, subsequently pressed an inquiry into Casey's own business dealings.

It was understood that Goldwater wanted Casey, 69, to step down in favor of Inman, whom Goldwater once called the best spy in the world, but the White House fought back.

The Reagan administration told Goldwater that if Casey went, so would Inman, according to intelligence sources. Goldwater backed off.

After that, Inman no longer felt that the White House valued his services, the intelligence sources said. The situation became worse when William Clark became national security adviser in January, the sources said; Clark and Inman did not get along.

INMAN IS KNOWN as a brilliant intelligence officer to some and a cold-hearted careerist to others. His specialty has been high-technology satellite surveillance.

During the Carter administration he rose to head the supersecret National Security Agency, which breaks other nations' codes and listens in on radio, satellite and other international communications.

While at NSA he gave the Justice Department its first word that Billy Carter had an "arrangement" with the Libyan government. Intelligence sources said Inman established a system at NSA under which politically sensitive information went directly to him and almost nowhere else.

INMAN TOLD Jimmy Carter at the end of his term that he would stay on at NSA, but only for a year or 18 months. After Reagan moved him to the CIA job, however, it was anticipated that he would serve longer.

When Casey, widely considered an amateur at intelligence work, was nominated as CIA director, Inman was praised as a professional who could keep the spy agency on course. The Senate confirmed him by a vote of 94 to 0.

Rep. Edward Boland (D., Mass.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said of Inman's resignation:

"I view this development with the deepest regret. Admiral Inman is the nation's finest professional intelligence officer. During his exceptional career he has enjoyed the full confidence (of the committee)."